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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a review of the literature on university-school collaborative efforts and describes the status of such efforts in Mississippi. A K-12 task force appointed by the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Education was assigned to perform an audit of Mississippi collaboratives. The audit identified many school-university partnerships involving Mississippi's eight public four-year universities. These are classified into 15 categories: inservice education/faculty development/"academic alliances"; programs offering college-level instruction to precollege students; services for minority, disadvantaged, and at-risk students; gifted and talented; preservice/training new teachers; articulation; curriculum development; research on teaching and learning; programs for administrators; adopt-a-school; consortia; coordination of collaborative activities; national writing project; tutoring programs; and miscellaneous. A table lists the number of people impacted and the amount of external funding made available to these programs. The paper concludes that the programs reported in the audit stand as testimony to the fact that gulfs can be bridged when educators from schools and colleges regard one another as equal partners having overlapping missions. The importance of communicating the existence of projects and their success is emphasized. (Contains 11 references.) (JDD)

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School University Partnerships: A Status Report

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Running Head: COLLABORATION

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Introduction

School and college partnerships have experienced extraordinary growth over the past 15 years (Wilbur & Lambert, 1991). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (PL 89-10), the Higher Education Act of 1965 (PL 89-329), the Teacher Center Movement, and Teacher Corps emphasized and required collaboration to improve education. Collaboration is perceived by funding agencies as a valuable strategy leading to fundamental reform. The publication of "A Nation At Risk" fostered great interest in collaboration as a means to improve education (Wilbur & Lambert, 1991). This paper describes university-school collaborative efforts in the State of Mississippi.

Review of Literature

Effective collaboration has been studied from various vantage points. A recent ERIC search produced 2688 citations on the broad topic of university-school collaboration (Lovell, 1993). University-school collaboratives are programs in which university and college faculty, K-12 school teachers and staff, educational administrators, and undergraduate and graduate students share expertise, time, energy, and other resources to implement programs. Typical collaboratives include preservice and inservice

education, curriculum and staff development, and research to achieve mutual objectives in educational improvement (Pine & Keene, 1989).

Drawing from the literature, DeBevoise (1986) and Hord (1986) identified nine contributing factors to effective collaborations:

1. commitment from institutional officials;
2. mutual needs and interests;
3. clarification concerning goals, roles, and control;
4. sufficient time;
5. adequate energy;
6. effective communication;
7. leadership;
8. resources; and
9. ongoing evaluation.

Successful elements in partnerships in teacher education were reported by Smith and Auger (1985). Among the elements reported were: (1) trust - collaborative programs should be operated in a spirit of cooperation, not in mechanical arrangement; (2) mutuality - levels of participation must be at a depth that all participants are enabled to experience ownership of the collaborative effort; (3) timeliness - secure the best time for professional wisdom and current needs to intersect; and (4) results - all participants in the collaborative effort must perceive

benefits resulting from the partnership. Each of these elements are keys to an effective partnership-collaboration. Quality of education in the university is dependent upon secondary education and the students produced. However, for quality to exist in secondary education, higher education must produce skilled teachers and administrators to prepare their future students. If overall quality in education is to improve along this cycle, these four elements are necessary for a dynamic, mutually beneficial partnership to exist.

Successful collaboration between universities and schools is built on mutual need and satisfaction with realistic expectations (DeBevoise, 1986). The nature of the collaborative relationship depends on what the cooperating parties hope to achieve. DeBevoise proposed that collaboration starts with administrative support, depends on a community of believers, has a need for realistic expectations, should work toward consumer satisfaction, and should avoid internal politics of the individual institutions involved.

Educational leadership and administration are keys to the success of any collaborative project. Successful collaboration requires leadership that is dynamic and empowering in order to bring divergent agencies together for a common purpose. Fullan (1992)

formulated eight guidelines for administrators when working interactively with teachers and communities:

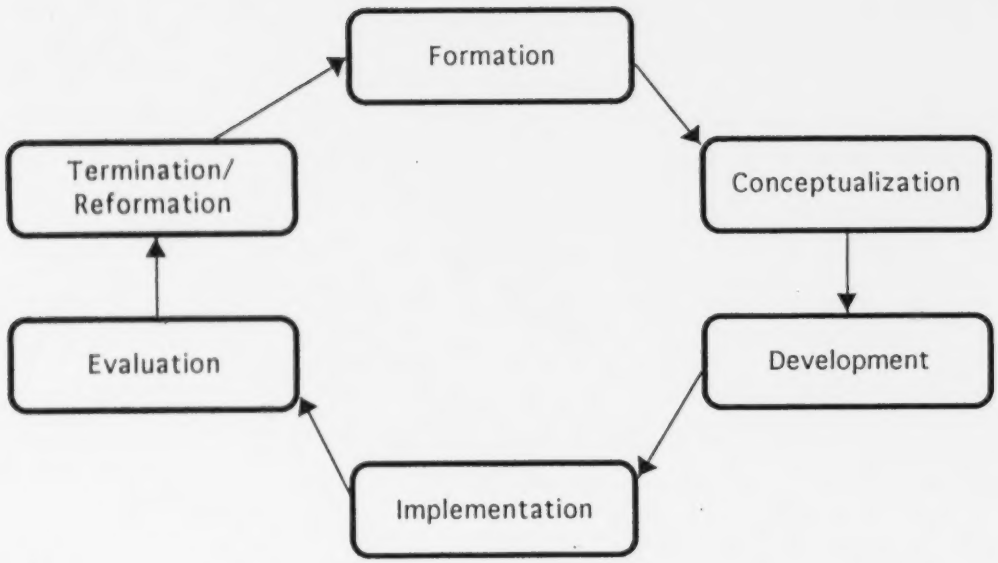
- Understand the culture of the school before attempting change
- Value your teachers
- Extend what you value
- Express what you value
- Promote collaboration
- Make menus, not mandates
- Use bureaucratic means to facilitate, not to constrain
- Connect with the wider environment

Kagan (1991) characterized collaboration as a developmental process, with six stages of development:

1. formation-awareness of a problem, sharing power and control;
2. conceptualization-defining mission and objectives, identifying their roles and responsibilities;
3. development-putting vision into practice;
4. implementation-deciding steps and facing the realities;
5. evaluation-checking outcomes based on objectives; and
6. termination/reformation-redefining the shared mission and administering the needs.

As shown in the illustration on the following page, when collaboration is viewed as an ongoing program, this process becomes a cycle an organization can use in decision making and leadership decision making.

Model 1



School University Partnerships: A Status Report

During the fall of 1993, a K-12 Task Force was appointed by the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Education (IHL). The Task Force was composed of university professors and administrators to examine collaborative efforts between schools and universities. The Task Force was given an "open ended" charge to bring the expertise and the leadership of the group to bear on the goal of developing policy initiatives whereby higher education could assist K-12 professionals in achieving the educational objectives of the state.

In addition to the "open ended" charge, the following objectives were established:

A. To perform an audit of Mississippi collaboratives and compile a comprehensive program audit of activities currently being undertaken by postsecondary educational institutions which are of potential benefit to K-12 schools.

B. To identify successful and effective programs in other states.

C. To recommend steps by which the IHL can adopt policies which can be reorganized into the institutions.

D. To identify systematic organizational structures which can be reorganized into the institutions.

In consideration of the time and space available, the national study is not covered in this paper.

The Task Force began with the goal to evaluate and recommend programs and initiatives that would provide assistance to K-12 education. The Task Force was also guided by the philosophy that there is too much prescriptive intrusion from a variety of sources in K-12 education. The Task Force also endeavored to produce a document that could be used as a resource by K-12 professionals.

Mutual interdependence is the nature of modern organizational life. Interdependent organizations can be more effective if they collaborate. Although collaboration is difficult, Mississippi has many positive examples that should be encouraged and

nurtured. The literature indicates that successful collaboration requires the presence of mutual goals shared by both K-12 and university partners. The Task Force believes that successful K-12 university collaboration is characterized by the following:

- Recognition that all levels of education have complimentary goals even though they may be dissimilar organizations. This dissimilarity can become a positive rather than a negative factor.
- Recognition of overlapping self-interests represented by the knowledge that the client population is the same albeit at different times.
- Commitment among all partners that the potential gains are worth the investment and sometimes the sacrifices of collaboration.

The K-12 Task Force responded to the charge given by performing an audit of collaborative efforts currently engaged in by Mississippi faculty and staff. The audit included personal interviews, development and testing of a survey instrument, administration of that survey instrument and telephone follow-up. The audit was comprehensive. A substantial amount of collaborative activity was identified, much of it exceptional by any professional standard which could be applied. The working group also provided summaries of that audit and an in-depth discussion of programs for review by the IHL Board.

Results of State Audit

The problem with the information provided is that, while a great deal of useful activity is represented, it is going virtually unnoticed across the state and nation. Often the campuses and districts where the partnership is being conducted have no knowledge of the collaborative activity. This represents a substantial public relations lapse for IHL in Mississippi and needs to be addressed.

The state audit identified school-university partnerships involving the eight public, 4-year IHL universities. These partnerships are represented in a Directory of School University Partnerships. The Task Force classified the partnerships into 15 categories. These categories begin with *In-Service Education/Faculty Development/"Academic Alliances."* Current programs range from those designed to create communities of scholars within the academic disciplines, centers for professional development and curriculum planning, to formal academic programs intended to extend the incentives for teachers to seek professional growth opportunities. The next area is *Programs Offering College-level Instruction to Precollege Students.* Many of the school-college partnerships seek to create opportunities and real incentives for precollege students to work hard

academically, to "test the waters" before full-time college study, to explore various career options, and to understand the commitment necessary to be successful in a given field.

The energies of many collaboratives that focus on the educational needs of minorities and those students deemed to be "at risk" are covered in the area titled *Minority, Disadvantaged, and "At Risk" Students*. Of particular interest are those collaboratives that employ a variety of rewards and incentives to encourage students to elect and successfully complete the necessary academic subjects that will allow them to pursue the widest range of career options, especially relating to mathematical, science, and technical fields. The next area notes that the aim of some partnerships between schools, colleges and universities, business and industry, and government agencies is to develop the full potential of young people identified as *Gifted and Talented*. These partnerships seek to strengthen the curricula and build on student experiences by helping schools offer a variety of challenging new courses.

Collaborative efforts which afford the closest ties between teacher training institutions and local schools are examined in the area of *Preservice/Training New Teachers*. It is apparent that both types of

institutions have a strong vested interest in the adequacy of such programs and each can make a unique contribution to the process of preparing new professionals for the field. Another area examined is that of *Articulation*. When the word "articulation" is used in the context of education, we generally think of the movement of students between and among institutions and instructional programs. This category contains cooperative programs that exist primarily to smooth the transition for students moving from high schools to colleges and universities, vocational and technical programs, and to the world of industry and business.

A natural area of cooperation between schools and colleges is *Curriculum Development*. This area focuses on the development and evaluation of courses, even entire curricula, for the purpose of improving students' achievement throughout education. Closely tied to curriculum is the section dealing with *Research on Teaching and Learning* which includes a group of cooperative programs that have made educational research and evaluation of courses their primary focus. Administrators are critical to affecting change and innovation in schools. *Programs for Administrators* examines programs consisting of institutes, academies, and projects designed to increase managerial effectiveness by improving leadership and problem

solving, budget management, resource acquisition, community support efforts, and administrative monitoring of needed instructional improvement.

The next area is *Adopt-A-School*. Through such "adoptions," many vital relationships are emerging, making it possible for institutions to assist one another in program and staff development, share facilities, exchange faculty and leaders, assist in job placement and counseling, and focus on the needs of special populations. Organized as networks, the partnerships covered in *Consortia* include alliances of educational and cultural institutions, business and industry, educational associations, and government agencies. Some partnerships have been created to serve as "umbrella agencies" to coordinate a wide range of cooperative services and programs. In *Coordination of Collaborative Activities*, we see programs created to foster cross-cultural understanding, special colloquiums for students that focus on enrichment in particular disciplines, and workshops and conferences for school and college faculty and school administrators to foster professional growth.

The descriptions included in the *National Writing Project* section are representative samples of a project that began in the mid 1970s as a local program to address the well-publicized crisis in the teaching of

writing in schools (Wilbur & Lambert, 1991). The program has since expanded to include more than 140 programs across the country with the ultimate goal of having a major impact on the writing skills of students and the growth of the teacher as a professional. Included in the group *Tutoring Programs* are samples of collaborative efforts which provide internships for college undergraduates and opportunities for community members to volunteer to serve as tutors, lab assistants, lecturers, and teaching assistants. Such programs reinforce teacher instruction and integrate theory with practical field experience. The last section deals with programs that defy definition and are thus labeled *Miscellaneous*. These programs range from aiding the homeless, dealing with health and physical fitness, establishing diversified bases of learning, legal issues, to preparing teachers who are dedicated to remaining in their local communities after completing their training.

Two areas of special interest regarding the surveys specific to Mississippi are the numbers of people who have been impacted by collaborative programs and the amount of external funding that has been made available to these programs. The following table lists the populations and resources in each of the categories outlined above.

Table 1

Collaborative Program Impact
Mississippi Educational Groups

Program Category	Program Populations*					Externally Funded Projects	
	K - 12 Students	Teachers/ Counselors	Administrators/ School Board	Staff/ Assistants	University Students	Amount of Funding**	Number of Projects
In-Service/Faculty/"Academic Alliances"	146,542	8,437	516	3,642	641	2,390,524.	46
Pre-College Student/College Instruction	60					N/A	1
Minority/Disadvantaged/At Risk Students	48,392	2,649	110	123	163	11,618,029.	50
Gifted and Talented Students	797	48				84,872.	6
Pre-service/Training New Teachers	4,200				139	3,000.	2
Articulation Programs	23	50				20,000.	2
Curriculum Development	30,000	1,058				120,557.	9
Research on Teaching and Learning	40	5				N/A	N/A
Programs for Administrators		50	1,554			490,000.	9
Adopt - A - School	360	3			12	N/A	N/A
Consortia	156,906	8,328	595	61	20	2,527,454.	11
Coordination of Collaborative Activities	8,981	198	26	167	90	395,000.	8
National Writing Project	360	10,335	650	100		121,000.	3
Tutoring Programs	278	700			90	188,366.	3
Miscellaneous	73,153	11,285	892	2,170	259	2,115,131.	71
Totals	470,092	44,646	4,343	6,263	1,414	20,073,927.	221

* In many cases, population figures were not given or school districts were named but not broken down into individual numbers.
** Many projects that listed external funding provided no data concerning amounts.

In looking at the population numbers, the reader will be drawn to the seemingly large numbers of persons participating in programs that are collaborative in nature. When one considers that the projected total population for 1995 in the K - 12 age group for the State of Mississippi is 668,059 (Logue, 1991), then over 470,000 children involved in collaborative programs seems astounding. Although there are programs that will overlap one another and reach the same individual in different areas, the numbers shown are conservative estimates of the reports. Many programs did not list specific numbers but referred to school- or district-wide programs. The importance of these

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numbers in regard to collaborative programming is involvement. Successful collaborative programs are taking place in school districts all across the state and have a profound influence on the lives of many children and adults alike.

Most of these partnerships began with limited funding. There was a strong personal desire by many people to see some of these programs get started. Many hours of volunteer work and energy have gone into making many of these collaborations a reality. The table shows, however, that out of a total of 435 projects reflected in the survey data, 221 programs have attracted in excess of $20,000,000 in external funds. Funding agencies, private interests, business and industry, and educational institutions reflect the shared desire and interests in expediting the improvement of the education of our children.

Conclusion

It is evident that collaborative efforts have great potential to improve the quality of education in Mississippi and across the nation. Schools can become dynamic centers of learning for students, teachers, administrators, and university faculty through carefully planned partnerships among educational institutions and personnel. It has been argued that the survival of organizations, institutions, and

society will depend upon the ability of groups to collaborate in achieving common goals and objectives (Toffler, 1980). When a group of people support an idea, rather than an individual working alone, we multiply our efforts in countless areas, from funding to networking; from experience to expertise.

Significant and ongoing improvement in education will not take place without cooperative willingness and professional agreement on the part of teachers and administrators, state department personnel, and organizational leaders. The time has come for education professionals in Mississippi to recognize the collaborative work already being done across the state while taking a proactive stance in providing more of the intellectual and professional leadership and direction to educational reform and renewal.

Personal responsibility as educators for the future of learning in Mississippi is an important factor in any reform approach. It is simple to look to the past to find reasoning for the status quo or excuses for inactivity in bridging the gulf that has existed between higher education and K-12 schools across the country. The programs reported in this survey stand as testimony to the fact that gulfs can be bridged when educators from schools and colleges regard one another as equal partners having overlapping

missions. It is exciting to see so many common missions apparent around our state and nation.

While new program development is needed in education, it is important that we cooperate in communicating success of projects to other schools, universities, districts, and states. Contained in the reports of collaborative programs, both in Mississippi and nationally, is an abundance of information that warrants not only further examination but implementation as well. Change is coming to education. Michael Rocklein, (1994) referring to the collaborative program called College Connection, said that with global market economies requiring a better trained work force, we need to do those things in our restructuring efforts to ensure that more students will connect successfully with higher education. University-school collaborations and partnerships provide and will continue to provide a much needed link in the education process.

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